



ucare

# For the Lifespan: The Caregiver Guide

## Module 1

### Providing Personal Care



# Introduction

- The importance of providing personal care cannot be overstated. Your caregiving affects the overall health, independence, and well-being of the person you care for. You provide peace of mind, comfort, and security.
- Caregiving often improves relationships, enhances an appreciation of life, brings out hidden strengths, and provides a sense of accomplishment.



# Objectives



After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Understand general guidelines of providing care.
- Understand how journaling may help.
- Learn tips to make bathing, dressing, and grooming easier.
- Recognize how to prevent pressure ulcers.
- Recognize the importance of exercise.
- Learn some body mechanics for the caregiver.

# General Guidelines for Providing Care

- **Take care of yourself** – You need to stay physically and emotionally strong.
- Get enough rest, eat healthy meals, exercise frequently, use good body mechanics, share your feelings, laugh, stay positive, and take the time to relax and do some things you enjoy.



# Ask For and Accept Help

- Don't try to do everything yourself or more than you are realistically able.
- Often one family member is the primary caregiver.
- Ask family members, neighbors, friends, church members, and other groups for help.
- Accept their offers of assistance.
- You can also consider hiring help.
- Develop contingency plans.



# Cope with Stress



- Many tasks, limited time and resources.
- Look at the big picture. Will it matter in a year?
- Take one day or one hour at a time.
- Don't demand perfection - yourself or care recipient.
- Let go of any anger or resentment.
- Connect with others and share your feelings.
- Stay positive, what are you grateful for?
- Always believe in yourself.
- [Utahparentcenter.org](http://Utahparentcenter.org), [Alz.org](http://Alz.org), [AARP.org](http://AARP.org), [Ndsu.edu](http://Ndsu.edu), [WebMD.com](http://WebMD.com), [Aging.slco.org](http://Aging.slco.org), [Caregiving.org](http://Caregiving.org)

# Time Management

- Schedule, organize, and bundle tasks.
- Drop tasks that aren't necessary.
- Learn to say “no”.
- Ask other people to help you.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Hire someone privately.
- Exchange services for room and board.



# Maintain Dignity

- Showing respect to the person you care for will help them maintain their dignity.
- Remember to frequently point out their strengths and positive attributes to help them feel appreciated and maintain their self-esteem.





# Communicate Effectively

- It may be challenging to communicate if they are hard of hearing, unable to speak, or have cognitive disabilities.
- It is important to communicate what you are doing to help your care recipient understand and be more involved.
- Listening to concerns and feelings will help them feel appreciated and valued.



# Honor Preferences

- Provide choices for daily activities when possible and follow your care recipient's preferences as much as you realistically can.
- Encourage the person you care for to perform the tasks they can to enhance their independence.



# Keep the Environment Safe



- Assess the home of your care recipient for safety hazards.
- Address any potential problems to minimize or eliminate potential accidents.
- Assessment should include entrances, plumbing, electrical system, kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, flooring, garage/driveway, structural integrity, animal care and control, pests, sanitation level, accessibility, and excessive clutter/hoarding.
- See UCare Module 9, Keeping Your Home and the Person You Care for Safe, for more information.

# Assess Abilities and Needs



- Evaluate your care recipient's abilities to determine what their needs are, and estimate how much time, money, and resources it will take to fulfill those needs.
- Assess all daily functions, including bathing, dressing, exercising, hygiene, eating, walking, toileting, mobility, transferring, housework, meal prep, medication, laundry, transportation, shopping, handling the mail, and yard care.
- There are checklists for assessing needs on the Utah Coalition for Caregiver Support website: [www.caregivers.utah.gov/assess\\_needs.htm](http://www.caregivers.utah.gov/assess_needs.htm)

# Develop a Care Plan



- Determine the best ways to complete tasks and how much time/resources you'll need.
- Determine if more support is needed.
- Journal the day's events and tasks, when each occurs, and how much time it takes.
- Journal aging and abnormal behaviors to assess condition and any changes that occur.
- Journal tasks that make you feel stressed, and how you coped to decide if someone else should take over those tasks, or things to change.
- Journaling can be used to develop a care chart.

# Care Charts

- There are several different ways to chart tasks.
- One is by care need, whether help is needed, how often, current help, and who else can help.
- A different way lists task, level of care, frequency, and whether your care recipient performs the task, you perform the task, family or friends can perform the task, or if paid help is needed for the task.
- Another way is to list the tasks in one column and the level of help needed in the next column, from none, to some, to a lot.

# A little humor...

- Speaking of age...  
A 104 year old woman was asked by reporters, “What is the best thing about reaching 104 years of age?” She simply replied, “No peer pressure.”



# Dressing/Organizing Clothing

- Allow to dress themselves if possible.
- Use Velcro instead of buttons or ties.
- Pants with elastic waists are easier.
- Buy duplicate clothing if needed.
- Dress in layers.
- Hang whole outfits together.
- Label clothing for easier identification.
- Use plastic clips or “sock locks” for socks.





# Bathing



- Try to stay relaxed, pleasant, and low-key.
- For safety reasons, recommend showers or a portable bath.
- Use a hand-held nozzle, shower bench, and install grab bars.
- Wash gently and pat dry. Don't scrub or rub fragile skin.
- Start with the face, then torso and arms, then legs and feet, and the private parts LAST. Try to at least wash the private parts.
- It may help to outline the tub, shower lip, and toilet with dark tape on the edges, or to install a bright toilet seat that contrasts with the floor and walls.
- Use other terms if the word bath is upsetting.
- Drape a towel over them if they value privacy.



# Mouth Care



- Good regular oral care can prevent disease. Dental disease can lead to other serious health concerns. Bacteria from the mouth can travel to other parts of the body.
- Have dental checkups every 6–12 months.
- Monitor for chipped teeth, gum bleeding, red or swollen gums, loss of taste, or bad breath.
- Teeth should be brushed twice, especially before bed.
- Floss once a day.
- Clean dentures once a day.
- Check out adaptive toothbrush handles at [www.abledata.com](http://www.abledata.com).

# Nails



- Inspect the nails regularly.
- Assemble any supplies needed.
- Wash your hands and their hands.
- File/clip fingernails only after bathing/soaking.
- Massage hands and feet with lotion. Rub into the fingernails and cuticles.
- Toenails should only be clipped by a podiatrist. Some make house calls.

# Hair



- Encourage an easy to maintain hairstyle.
- Trim regularly to take care of split-ends.
- Assemble supplies before you begin.
- Use gentle baby shampoo and conditioner.
- Some hairdressers will make house calls or reduce rates for elderly people.
- An in-home caregiver may also be asked to take care of hair.

# Incontinence



- Visit a doctor for evaluation and to determine if there is an underlying cause to address/treat.
- There are several reasons for incontinence with different treatment options. Find out all you can about the cause and treatments.
- Make sure the path to the bathroom is clear, the toilet is easy to use, and clothes are simple to remove. You can kindly remind or take them.
- If treatment options, behavioral changes, or medication hasn't helped, you may need to convince your care recipient to wear adult briefs.

# Physical Activity and Exercise



- Prevents or delays many diseases.
- Maintains strength, flexibility, endurance, balance, range of motion, and independence.
- Improves circulation, decreases blood pressure and cholesterol levels, improves the body's ability to use insulin, and decreases muscle and bone density loss.
- Helps to prevent falls, improve sleep and mood, improve or maintain cognitive function.

# Physical Activity and Exercise (cont.)

- Encourage as much movement and activity as possible, but discuss with a doctor first.
- Encourage frequent participation in fun activities.
- Check with gyms for senior discounts.
- Check to see if their Medicare plan offers Silver Sneakers with very low cost gym visits.
- Many senior centers offer exercise classes.
- Encourage stretching, strengthening, balancing, and aerobic exercises.
- Discuss with a PT if needed.



# Preventing Pressure Sores

- Try everything possible to prevent them.
- Frequent changes in position are the key.
- Change hourly - wheelchair and two hours - bed.
- Use good appropriate wheelchair cushions.
- Consult with a PT on proper positioning.
- Nutritious diets with fluids improve skin.
- Check skin daily for ulcers or irritation.
- Relieve pressure from the area and consult a physician as soon as possible.





# Caregiver Body Mechanics



- Start or maintain a regular exercise program.
- Try to use correct posture, alignment, and body mechanics at all times to avoid injury.
- Keep your back straight with the normal curve. Never bend your back or twist to pick something up.
- When lifting, keep your legs shoulder width apart. Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Keep the person or whatever you are lifting or carrying close to your body.
- Evaluate your abilities and limits on a regular basis.

# Review



- Always remember to take care of yourself.
- Ask for and let other people help you.
- Learn and practice ways to cope with stress.
- Organize your time and use planning tools.
- Respect and communicate with your care recipient.
- Tell them what you are doing. Listen to their concerns and feelings. Point out their strengths often.
- Provide choices and follow their preferences.
- Assess your home for hazards.

# Take a Break



# Take a Break (cont.)



- Take care of yourself every day.
- Give yourself a hug or pat on the arm.
- Think positive and be grateful.
- Think about the good things that happened or what you are grateful for every day.
  - I survived the day and didn't have to call 911.
  - I heard or saw something funny.
  - I called someone for help and they came.
  - I had a nice lunch or someone else cooked a meal.
  - Someone called to check on me.

# You Are a Champion



- “You have the colors of a true champion, a hero. Were you born with these colors? No, I think you earned them. Whatever else happens as your life unfurls, you will have the strength and courage you need. Choose your own path. Believe in yourself. You have the power, insight, and wisdom to succeed. For yours are the colors of a hero, a true champion, a caregiver.”

Judith Rappaport-Musson, *Eldercare 911*, pages 259-260.



# Things to Remember

- Remember to take good care of yourself by staying positive, exercising regularly, getting enough rest, eating nutritiously, using good body mechanics, keeping a sense of humor, relaxing, and doing something enjoyable when you can.
- Always believe in yourself and your abilities.
- Remember that you have the strength, courage, compassion, and wisdom to succeed.
- Thanks for your participation.

